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MOSES

THE CRIME OF POVERTY

Henry George

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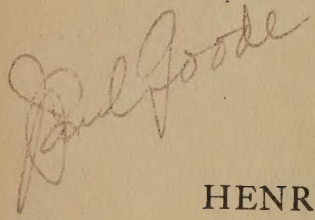

BY

HENRY GEORGE

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THERE is in modern thought a tendency to look upon the prominent characters of history as resultants rather than as initiatory forces. As in an earlier stage the irresistible disposition is to personification, so now it is to reverse this process, and to resolve into myths mighty figures long enshrined by tradition.

Yet if we try to trace to their sources movements whose perpetuated impulses eddy and play in the currents of our times, we at last reach the individual. It is true that "institutions make men," but it is also true that "in the beginnings men make institutions."

In a well-known passage Macaulay has described the impression made upon the imagination by the antiquity of that church, which, surviving dynasties and empires, carries the mind back to a time when the smoke of sacrifice rose from the Pantheon and camelopard and tiger bounded in the Flavian amphitheatre. But there still exist among us observances—transmitted in unbroken succession from father to son—that go back to a yet more remote past. Each recurring year brings a day on which, in every land, there are men who, gathering about them their families, and attired as if for a journey, eat with solemnity a hurried meal. Before the walls of Rome were traced, before Homer sang, this feast was kept, and the event to which it points was even then centuries old.

That event signals the entrance upon the historic stage of a people on many accounts remarkable—a people who, though they never founded a great empire nor built a great

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The lecture "Moses" was first delivered by Henry George in San Francisco, June, 1878. The lecture was again delivered at Steinway Hall, New York, Nov. 27, 1887. It is the text of the American lecture that is reprinted in this booklet and differs from the first only in the addition of a few passages referring to American conditions.

metropolis, have exercised upon a large portion of mankind an influence, widespread, potent, and continuous; a people who have for nearly two thousand years been without country or organized nationality, yet have preserved their identity and faith through all vicissitudes of time and fortune—who have been overthrown, crushed, scattered; who have been ground, as it were, to very dust, and flung to the four winds of heaven; yet who, though thrones have fallen, and empires have perished, and creeds have changed, and living tongues have become dead, still exist with a vitality seemingly unimpaired—a people who unite the strangest contradictions; whose annals now blaze with glory, now sound the depths of shame and woe.

The advent of such a people marks an epoch in the history of the world. But it is not of that advent so much as of the central and colossal figure around which its traditions cluster that I propose to speak.

Three great religions place the leader of the Exodus upon the highest plane they allot to man. To Christendom and to Islam, as well as to Judaism, Moses is the mouthpiece and lawgiver of the Most High; the medium, clothed with supernatural powers, through which the Divine Will has spoken. Yet this very exaltation, by raising him above comparison, may prevent the real grandeur of the man from being seen. It is amid his brethren that Saul stands taller and fairer.

On the other hand, the latest school of Biblical criticism asserts that the books and legislation attributed to Moses are really the product of an age subsequent to that of the prophets. Yet to this Moses, looming vague and dim, of whom they can tell us almost nothing, they, too, attribute the beginning of that growth which flowered after centuries in the humanities of Jewish law, and in the sublime conception of one God, universal and eternal, the Almighty Father; and again, higher still and fairer,

culminated in that guiding star of spiritual light which rested over the stable of Bethlehem in Judea.

But whether wont to look on Moses in this way or in that, it may be sometimes worth our while to take the point of view in which all shades of belief or disbelief may find common ground, and accepting the main features of Hebrew record and tradition, consider them in the light of history as we know it, and of human nature as it shows itself today. Here is a case in which sacred history may be treated as we treat profane history without any shock to religious feeling. Nor can the keenest criticism resolve Moses into a myth. The fact of the Exodus presupposes such a leader.

To lead into freedom a people long crushed by tyranny; to discipline and order such a mighty host; to harden them into fighting men, before whom warlike tribes quailed and walled cities went down; to repress discontent and jealousy and mutiny; to combat reactions and reversions; to turn the quick, fierce flame of enthusiasm to the service of a steady purpose, require some towering character—a character blending in highest expression the qualities of politician, patriot, philosopher, and statesman.

Such a character in rough but strong outline the tradition shows us—the union of the wisdom of the Egyptians with the unselfish devotion of the meekest of men. From first to last, in every glimpse we get, this character is consistent with itself and with the mighty work which is its monument. It is the character of a great mind, hemmed in by conditions and limitations, and working with such forces and materials as were at hand—accomplishing, yet failing. Behind grand deeds a grander thought. Behind high performance the still nobler ideal.

Egypt was the mould of the Hebrew nation—the matrix, so to speak, in which a single family, or, at most, a small tribe grew to a people as numerous as the Ameri-

can people at the time of the Declaration of Independence. For four centuries, according to Hebrew tradition—that is to say, for a period longer than America has been known to Europe—this growing people, coming a patriarchal family from a roving, pastoral life, had been under the dominance of a highly developed and ancient civilization —a civilization whose fixity is symbolized by monuments that rival in endurance the everlasting hills—a civilization so ancient that the Pyramids, as we now know, were hoary with centuries ere Abraham looked upon them.

No matter how clearly the descendants of the kinsmen who came into Egypt at the invitation of the boy-slave become prime minister, maintained the distinction of race, and the traditions of a freer life, they must have been powerfully affected by such a civilization; and just as the Hebrews of today are Polish in Poland, German in Germany, and American in the United States, so, but far more clearly and strongly, the Hebrews of the Exodus must have been essentially Egyptians.

It is not remarkable, therefore, that the ancient Hebrew institutions show in so many points the influence of Egyptian ideas and customs. What is remarkable is the dissimilarity. To the unreflecting, nothing may seem more natural than that a people, in turning their backs upon a land where they had been long oppressed, should discard its ideas and institutions. But the student of history, the observer of politics, knows that nothing is more unnatural. Habits of thought are even more tyrannous than habits of body. They make for the masses of men a mental atmosphere out of which they can no more rise than out of the physical atmosphere. A people long used to despotism may rebel against a tyrant; they may break his statutes and repeal his laws, cover with odium that which he loved, and honor that which he hated; but they will hasten to set up another tyrant in his place. A people used to super-

stition may embrace a purer faith, but it will be only to degrade it to their old ideas. A people used to persecution may flee from it, but only to persecute in their turn when they get power.

For "institutions make men." And when amid a people used to institutions of one kind, we see suddenly arise institutions of an opposite kind, we know that behind them must be that active, that initiative force—the men who in the beginnings make institutions.

This is what occurs in the Exodus. The striking differences between Egyptian and Hebrew polity are not of form but of essence. The tendency of the one is to subordination and oppression; of the other to individual freedom. Strangest of recorded births! From out the strongest and most splendid despotism of antiquity comes the freest republic. From between the paws of the rock-hewn Sphinx rises the genius of human liberty, and the trumpets of the Exodus throb with the defiant proclamation of the rights of man.

Consider what Egypt was. The very grandeur of her monuments, that after the lapse, not of centuries, but of milleniums, seem to say to us, as the Egyptian priests said to the boastful Greeks, "Ye are children!" testify to the enslavement of the people—are the enduring witnesses of a social organization that rested on the masses an immovable weight. That narrow Nile valley, the cradle of the arts and sciences, the scene, perhaps, of the greatest triumphs of the human mind, is also the scene of its most abject enslavement. In the long centuries of its splendor, its lord, secure in the possession of irresistible temporal power, and securer still in the awful sanctions of a mystical religion, was as a god on earth, to cover whose poor carcass with a tomb befitting his state hundreds of thousands toiled away their lives. For the classes who came next to him were all the sensuous delights of a most lux-

urious civilization, and high intellectual pleasures which the mysteries of the temple hid from vulgar profanation. But for the millions who constituted the base of the social pyramid there was but the lash to stimulate their toil, and the worship of beasts to satisfy the yearnings of the soul. From time immemorial to the present day the lot of the Egyptian peasant has been to work and to starve that those above him might live daintily. He has never rebelled. The spirit for that was long ago crushed out of him by institutions which make him what he is. He knows but to suffer and to die.

Imagine what opportune circumstance we may, yet to organize and to carry on a movement resulting in the release of a great people from such soul-subduing tyranny, backed by an army of half a million highly trained soldiers, requires a leadership of a most commanding and consummate genius. But this task, surpassingly great though it is, is not the measure of the greatness of the leader of the Exodus. It is not in the deliverance from Egypt, it is in the constructive statesmanship that laid the foundations of the Hebrew commonwealth that the superlative grandeur of that leadership looms up. As we cannot imagine the Exodus without the great leader, neither can we account for the Hebrew polity without the great statesman. Not merely intellectually great, but morally great—a statesman aglow with the unselfish patriotism that refuses to grasp a scepter or found a dynasty.

The lessons of modern history, the manifestations of human nature that we behold around us, would teach us to see in the essential divergence of the Hebrew polity from that of Egypt the impress of a master mind, even if Hebrew tradition had not testified both to the influence of such a mind, and to the constant disposition of accustomed ideas to reassert themselves in the minds of the people. Over and over again the murmurings break out; no sooner is

the back of Moses turned than the cry, "These be thy gods, O Israel!" announces the setting up of the Egyptian calf; while the strength of the monarchial principle shows itself in the inauguration of a king as quickly as the far-reaching influence of the great leader is somewhat spent.

It matters not when or by whom were compiled the books popularly attributed to Moses; it matters not how much of the code there given may be the survivals of more ancient usage or the amplifications of a later age; its great features bear the stamp of a mind far in advance of people and time, of a mind that beneath effects sought for causes, of a mind that drifted not with the tide of events but aimed at a definite purpose.

The outlines that the record gives us of the character of Moses—the brief relations that wherever the Hebrew scriptures are read have hung the chambers of the imagination with vivid pictures—are in every way consistent with this idea. What we know of the life illustrates what we know of the work. What we know of the work illumines the life.

It was not an empire, such as had reached full development in Egypt or existed in rudimentary patriarchal form in the tribes around, that Moses aimed to found. Nor was it a republic where the freedom of the citizen rested on the servitude of the helot, and the individual was sacrificed to the state. It was a commonwealth based upon the individual—a commonwealth whose ideal it was that every man should sit under his own vine and fig tree, with none to vex him or make him afraid; a commonwealth in which none should be condemned to ceaseless toil; in which, for even the bond slave, there should be hope, in which, for even the beast of burden there should be rest. A commonwealth in which, in the absence of deep poverty, the manly virtues that spring from personal independence should harden into a national character—a commonwealth in which the family

affections might knit their tendrils around each member, binding with links stronger than steel the various parts into the living whole.

It is not the protection of property, but the protection of humanity, that is the aim of the Mosaic code. Its sanctions are not directed to securing the strong in heaping up wealth so much as to preventing the weak from being crowded to the wall. At every point it interposes its barriers to the selfish greed that, if left unchecked, will surely differentiate men into landlord and serf, capitalist and workman, millionaire and tramp, ruler and ruled. Its Sabbath day and Sabbath year secure, even to the lowliest, rest and leisure. With the blast of the jubilee trumpets the slave goes free, the debt that cannot be paid is canceled, and a re-division of the land secures again to the poorest his fair share in the bounty of the common Creator. The reaper must leave something for the gleaner; even the ox cannot be muzzled as he treadeth out the corn. Everywhere, in everything, the dominant idea is that of our homely phrase —"Live and let live!"

And the religion with which this civil policy is so closely intertwined exhibits kindred features——from the idea of the brotherhood of man springs the idea of the fatherhood of God. Though the forms may resemble those of Egypt, the spirit is that which Egypt had lost. Though a hereditary priesthood is retained, the law in its fullness is announced to all the people. Though the Egyptian rite of circumcision is preserved and Egyptian symbols reappear in all the externals of worship, the tendency to take the type for the reality is sternly repressed. It is only when we think of the bulls and the hawks, of the deified cats and sacred ichneumons of Egypt, that we realize the full meaning of the command: "Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image!"

And if we seek beneath form and symbol and command

the thought of which they are but the expression, we find that the great distinctive feature of the Hebrew religion, that which separates it by such a wide gulf from the religions amid which it grew up, is its utilitarianism, its recognition of divine law in human life. It asserts, not a God who is confined to the far-off beginning or the vague future, who is over and above and beyond men, but a God who in His inexorable law is here and now; a God of the living as well as the dead; a God of the market place as well as of the temple; a God whose judgments wait not another world for execution, but whose immutable decrees will, in this life, give happiness to the people that heed them and bring misery upon the people who forget them. Amid the forms of splendid degradation in which a once noble religion had in Egypt sunk to petrification, amid a social order in which the divine justice seemed to sleep, I AM was the truth that dawned upon Moses. And in his desert contemplation of nature's flux and reflux, the death that bounds her life, the life she brings from death, always consuming yet never consumed —I AM was the message that fell upon his inner ear.

The absence in the Mosaic books of any reference to a future life is only intelligible by the prominence into which the truth is brought. Nothing could have been more familiar to the Hebrews of the Exodus than the doctrine of immortality. The continued existence of the soul, the judgment after death, the rewards and punishments of the future state, were the constant subjects of Egyptian thought and art. But a truth may be hidden or thrown into the background by the intensity with which another truth is grasped. And the doctrine of immortality, springing as it does from the very depths of human nature, ministering to aspirations which become stronger and stronger as intellectual life rises to higher planes and the life of the affections becomes more intense,

may yet become so incrusted with degrading superstitions, may be turned by craft and selfishness into such a potent instrument for enslavement, and so used to justify crimes at which every natural instinct revolts, that to the earnest spirit of the social reformer it may seem like an agency of oppression to enchain the intellect and prevent true progress; a lying device with which the cunning fetter the credulous.

The belief in the immortality of the soul must have existed in strong forms among the masses of the Hebrew people. But the truth that Moses brought so prominently forward, the truth his gaze was concentrated upon, is the truth that has often been thrust aside by the doctrine of immortality, and that may perhaps, at times, react on it in the same way. This is the truth that the actions of men bear fruit in this world, that though on the petty scale of individual life wickedness may seem to go unpunished and wrong to be rewarded, there is yet a Nemesis that with tireless feet and pitiless arm follows every national crime, and smites the children for the father's transgression; the truth that each individual must act upon and be acted upon by the society of which he is a part, that all must in some degree suffer for the sin of each, and the life of each be dominated by the conditions imposed by all. It is the intense appreciation of this truth that gives the Mosaic institutions so practical and utilitarian a character. Their genius, if I may so speak, leaves the abstract speculations where thought so easily loses and wastes itself, or finds expression only in symbols that become finally but the basis of superstition in order that it may concentrate attention upon the laws which determine the happiness or misery of men upon this earth. Its lessons have never tended to the essential selfishness of asceticism, which is so prominent a feature in Brahminism and Buddhism, and from which Christianity and Islamism have not been exempt.

Its injunction has never been, "Leave the world to itself that you may save your own soul," but rather, "Do your duty in the world that you may be happier and the world be better." It has disdained no sanitary regulation that might secure the health of the body. Its promise has been of peace and plenty and length of days, of stalwart sons and comely daughters.

It may be that the feeling of Moses in regard to a future life was that expressed in the language of the Stoic: "It is the business of Jupiter, not mine"; or it may be that it partook of the same revulsion that shows itself in modern times, when a spirit essentially religious has been turned against the forms and expressions of religion, because these forms and expressions have been made the props and the bulwarks of tyranny, and even the name and teachings of the Carpenter's Son perverted into supports of social injustice—used to guard the pomp of Caesar and justify the greed of Dives.

Yet, however such feelings influenced Moses, I cannot think that such a soul as his, living such a life as his—feeling the exaltation of great thoughts, feeling the burden of great cares, feeling the bitterness of great disappointments—did not stretch forward to the hope beyond; did not rest and strengthen and ground itself in the confident belief that the death of the body is but the emancipation of the mind; did not feel the assurance that there is a power in the universe upon which it might confidently rely, through wreck of matter and crash of worlds. Yet the great concern of Moses was with the duty that lay plainly before him; the effort to lay the foundation of a social state in which deep poverty and degrading want should be unknown—where men released from the meaner struggles that waste human energy should have opportunity for intellectual and moral development.

Here stands out the greatness of the man. What was

the wisdom and stretch of the forethought which in the desert sought to guard in advance against the dangers of a settled state, let the present speak.

In the full blaze of the nineteenth century, when every child in our schools may know of common truths things of which the Egyptian sages never dreamed; when the earth has been mapped and the stars have been weighed; when steam and electricity have been pressed into our service, and science is wresting from nature secret after secret—it is but natural to look back upon the wisdom of three thousand years ago as the man looks back upon the learning of the child.

And yet for all this wonderful increase in knowledge, for all this enormous gain of productive power, where is the country in the civilized world in which today there is not want and suffering—where the masses are not condemned to toil that gives no leisure, and all classes are not pursued by a greed of gain that makes life an ignoble struggle to get and to keep? Three thousand years of advance, and still the moan goes up: "They have made our lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service!" Three thousand years of advance! and the piteous voices of little children are in the moan.

Standing as I stand, where modern ideas have had fullest, freest development; in the newest great city of the newest great nation; by the side of that ultimate sea, where ends the westward march of the race that has circled the globe, and farther west meets farthest east, the cool shades and sweet waters whose promise has so long lured us on seem dissolving into mocking mirage.

Over ocean wastes far wider than the Syrian desert we have sought our promised land—no narrow strip between the mountains and the sea, but a wide and virgin continent. Here, in greater freedom, with vaster knowl-

edge and fuller experience, we are building up a nation that leads the van of modern progress.

And yet while we prate of the rights of man there are already among us thousands and thousands who find it difficult to assert the first of natural rights—the right to earn an honest living; thousands who from time to time must accept of degrading charity or starve.

We boast of equality before the law; yet notoriously justice is deaf to the call of him who has no gold and blind to the sin of him who has.

We pride ourselves upon our common schools; yet after our boys and girls are educated we vainly ask, "What shall we do with them?" And about our colleges children are growing up in vice and crime, because from their homes poverty has driven all refining influences.

We pin our faith to universal suffrage; yet with all power in the hands of the people, the control of public affairs is passing into the hands of a class of professional politicians, and our governments are, in many cases, becoming but a means for robbery of the people.

We have prohibited hereditary distinctions, we have forbidden titles of nobility; yet there is growing up among us an aristocracy of wealth as powerful and merciless as any that ever held sway.

We progress and we progress, we girdle continents with iron roads and knit cities together with the mesh of telegraph wires; each day brings some new invention; each year marks a fresh advance—the power of production increased, and the avenues of exchange cleared and broadened. Yet the complaint of "hard times" is louder and louder, and everywhere are men harassed by care and haunted by the fear of want. With swift, steady strides and prodigious leaps, the power of human hands to satisfy human wants advances and advances, is multiplied and multiplied. Yet the struggle for mere existence is more

and more intense, and human labor is becoming the cheapest of commodities. Beside glutted warehouses human beings grow faint with hunger and shiver with cold; under the shadow of churches festers the vice that is born of want.

Trace to its root the cause that is thus producing want in the midst of plenty, ignorance in the midst of intelligence, aristocracy in democracy, weakness in strength—that is giving to our civilization a one-sided and unstable development, and you will find it something which this Hebrew statesman three thousand years ago perceived and guarded against. Moses saw that the real cause of the enslavement of the masses of Egypt was what has everywhere produced enslavement, the possession by a class of the land upon which and from which the whole people must live. He saw that to permit in the land the same unqualified private ownership that by natural right attaches to the things produced by labor, would be inevitably to separate the people into the very rich and the very poor, inevitably to enslave labor—to make the few the masters of the many, no matter what the political forms; to bring vice and degradation, no matter what the religion.

And with the foresight of the philosophic statesman who legislates not for the need of a day, but for all the future, he sought, in ways suited to his times and conditions, to guard against this error. Everywhere in the Mosaic institutions is the land treated as the gift of the Creator to His common creatures, which no one has the right to monopolize. Everywhere it is, not your estate, or your property, not the land which you bought, or the land which you conquered, but "the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee"—"the land which the Lord lendeth thee." And by practical legislation, by regulations to which he gave the highest sanctions, he tried to guard against the wrong that converted ancient civilizations into despotisms

—the wrong that in after centuries ate out the heart of Rome— that produced the imbruting serfdom of Poland and the gaunt misery of Ireland, the wrong that is already filling American cities with idle men, and our virgin states with tramps. He not only provided for the fair division of the land among the people, and for making it fallow and common every seventh year, but by the institution of the jubilee he provided for a re-distribution of the land every fifty years, and made monopoly impossible.

I do not say that these institutions were, for their ultimate purpose, the very best that might even then have been devised, for Moses had to work, as all great constructive statesmen have to work, with the tools that came to his hand, and upon materials as he found them. Still less do I mean to say that forms suitable for that time and people are suitable for every time and people. I ask not veneration of the form, but recognition of the spirit.

Yet how common it is to venerate the form and to deny the spirit. There are many who believe that the Mosaic institutions were literally dictated by the Almighty, yet who would denounce as irreligious and "communistic" any application of their spirit to the present day. And yet today how much we owe to these institutions! This very day the only thing that stands between working classes and ceaseless toil is one of these Mosaic institutions. Nothing in political economy is better settled than that under conditions which now prevail the working classes would get no more for seven days' labor than they now get for six, and would find it as difficult to reduce their working hours as now.

Let the mistake of those who think that man was made for the Sabbath, rather than the Sabbath for man, be what it may; that there is one day in the week that the working man may call his own, one day in the week on

which hammer is silent and loom stands idle, is due, through Christianity, to Judaism—to the code promulgated in the Sinaitic wilderness. And who that considers the waste of productive forces can doubt that modern society would be not merely richer but happier, had we received as well as the Sabbath day the grand idea of the Sabbath year, or adapting its spirit to our changed conditions, secured in another way an equivalent reduction of working hours.

It is in these characteristics of the Mosaic institutions that, as in the fragments of a Colossus, we may read the greatness of the mind whose impress they bear—of a mind in advance of its surroundings, in advance of its age; of one of those star souls that dwindle not with distance, but, glowing with the radiance of essential truth hold their light while institutions and languages and creeds change and pass.

That the thought was greater than the permanent expression it found, who can doubt? Yet from that day to this that expression has been in the world a living power.

From the free spirit of the Mosaic law sprang the intensity of family life that amid all dispersions and persecution has preserved the individuality of the Hebrew race; that love of independence that under the most adverse circumstances has characterized the Jew; that burning patriotism that flamed up in the Maccabees and bared the breasts of Jewish peasants to the serried steel of Grecian phalanx and the resistless onset of Roman legion; that stubborn courage that in exile and in torture held the Jew to his faith. It kindled that fire that has made the strains of Hebrew seers and poets phrase for us the highest exaltations of thought; that intellectual vigor that has over and over again made the dry staff bud and blossom. And passing outward from one narrow race it has exerted its power wherever the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures has been felt. It has toppled thrones and cast down hier-

archies. It strengthened the Scottish Covenanter in the hour of trial, and the Puritan amid the snows of a strange land. It charged with the Ironsides at Nasby; it stood behind the low redoubt on Bunker Hill.

But it is in example as in deed that such lives are helpful. It is thus that they dignify human nature and glorify human effort, and bring to those who struggle, hope and trust. The life of Moses, like the institutions of Moses, is a protest against that blasphemous doctrine, current now as it was three thousand years ago—that blasphemous doctrine preached ofttimes even from Christian pulpits—that the want and suffering of the masses of mankind flow from a mysterious dispensation of Providence, which we may lament, but can neither quarrel with nor alter. Let him who hugs that doctrine to himself, him to whom it seems that the squalor and brutishness with which the very centers of our civilization abound are not his affair, turn to the example of that life. For to him who will look, yet burns the bush; and to him who will hear, again comes the voice: "The people suffer, who will lead them forth?"

Adopted into the immediate family of the supreme monarch and earthly god; standing almost at the apex of the social pyramid which had for its base those toiling millions; priest and prince in a land where prince and priest might revel in all delights—everything that life could offer to gratify the senses or engage the intellect was open to him.

What to him the wail of them who beneath the fierce sun toiled under the whips of relentless masters? Heard from granite colonnade or beneath cool linen awning, it was mellowed by distance to monotonous music. Why should he question the Sphinx of Fate, or quarrel with destinies the high gods had decreed? So had it always been, for ages and ages; so must it ever be. The beetle rends the insect, and the hawk preys on the beetle; order on order, life rises from death and carnage, and higher pleas-

ures from lower agonies. Shall the man be better than nature? Soothing and restful flows the Nile, though underneath its placid surface finny tribes wage cruel war, and the stronger eat the weaker. Shall the gazer who would read the secrets of the stars turn because under his feet a worm may writhe?

Theirs to make bricks without straw; his a high place in the glorious procession that with gorgeous banners and glittering emblems, with clash of music and solemn chant, winds its shining way to dedicate the immortal edifice their toil has reared. Theirs the leek and the garlic, his to sit at the sumptuous feast. Why should he dwell on the irksomeness of bondage, he for whom the chariots waited, who might at will bestride the swift coursers of the Delta, or be borne on the bosom of the river with oars that beat time to songs? Did he long for the excitement of action? —there was the desert hunt, with the steeds fleeter than the antelope and lions trained like dogs. Did he crave rest and ease?—there was for him the soft swell of languorous music and the wreathed movements of dancing girls. Did he feel the stir of intellectual life?—in the arcana of the temples he was free to the lore of ages; an initiate in the select society where were discussed the most engrossing problems; a sharer in that intellectual pride that centuries after compared Greek philosophy to the babblings of children.

It was no sudden ebullition of passion that caused Moses to turn his back on all this, and to bring the strength and knowledge acquired in a dominant caste to the lifelong service of the oppressed. The forgetfulness of self manifested in the smiting of the Egyptians shines through the whole life. In institutions that moulded the character of a people, in institutions that to this day make easier the lot of toiling millions, we may read the stately purpose.

Through all that tradition has given us of that life

runs the same grand passion—the unselfish desire to make humanity better, happier, nobler. And the death is worthy of the life. Subordinating to the good of his people the natural disposition to found a dynasty, which in his case would have been so easy, he discards the claims of blood and calls to his place of leader the fittest man. Coming from a land where the rights of sepulture were regarded as all important, and the preservation of the body after death was the passion of life; among a people who were even then carrying the remains of their great ancestor, Joseph, to rest with his fathers, he yet conquered the last natural yearning and withdrew from the sight and sympathy of men to die alone and unattended, lest the idolatrous feeling, always ready to break forth, should in death accord him the superstitious reverence he had refused in life.

"No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." But while the despoiled tombs of the pharaohs mock the vanity that reared them, the name of the Hebrew who, revolting from their tyranny, strove for the elevation of his fellow-men, is yet a beacon light to the world.

Leader and servant of men! Law-giver and benefactor! Toiler toward the promised land seen only by the eye of faith! Type of the high souls who in every age have given to earth its heroes and its martyrs, whose deeds are the precious possession of the race, whose memories are its sacred heritage! With whom among the founders of empire shall we compare him?

To dispute about the inspiration of such a man were to dispute about words. From the depths of the unseen such characters must draw their strength; from fountains that flow only from the pure in heart must come their wisdom. Of something more real than matter; of something higher than the stars; of a light that will endure when suns are dead and dark; of a purpose of which the physical universe is but a passing phase, such lives tell.

THE CRIME OF POVERTY

The Crime of Poverty

Poverty is a crime. I do not mean that it is a crime to be poor. Murder is a crime; but it is not a crime to be murdered; and a man who is in poverty I look upon not as a criminal in himself so much as the victim of a crime for which others, as well, perhaps, as himself, are responsible. That poverty is a curse, the bitterest of curses, we all know. Carlyle was right when he said that the hell of which Englishmen are most afraid is the hell of poverty; and this is true, not of Englishmen alone, but of people all over the civilized world, no matter what their nationality. It is to escape this hell that we strive and strain and struggle; and work on oftentimes in blind habit long after the necessity for work is gone.

The curse born of poverty is not confined to the poor alone; it runs through all classes, even to the very rich. They, too, suffer; they must suffer; for there cannot be suffering in a community from which any class can totally escape. The vice, the crime, the ignorance, the meanness, born of poverty, poison, so to speak, the very air which rich and poor alike must breathe.

I walked down one of your streets this morning, and I saw three men going along with their hands chained together. I knew for certain that those men were not rich men; and, although I do not know the offense for which they were carried in chains through your streets, this, I think, I can safely say, that, if you trace it up you will find it in some way to spring from poverty. Nine-

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An address delivered in the Opera House, Burlington, Iowa, April 1, 1885, under the auspices of Burlington Assembly, No. 3135, Knights of Labor.

tenths of human misery, I think you will find, if you look, to be due to poverty. If a man chooses to be poor, he commits no crime in being poor, provided his poverty hurts no one but himself. If a man has others dependent upon him; if there are a wife and children whom it is his duty to support, then, if he voluntarily chooses poverty, it is a crime—aye, and I think that, in most cases, the men who have no one to support but themselves are men that are shirking their duty. A woman comes into the world for every man; and for every man who lives a single life, caring only for himself, there is some woman who is deprived of her natural supporter. But while a man who chooses to be poor cannot be charged with crime, it is certainly a crime to force poverty on others. And it seems to me clear that the great majority of those who suffer from poverty are poor not from their own particular faults, but because of conditions imposed by society at large. Therefore, I hold that poverty is a crime—not an individual crime, but a social crime; a crime for which we all, poor as well as rich, are responsible.

Two or three weeks ago I went one Sunday evening to the church of a famous Brooklyn preacher. Mr. Sankey was singing, and something like a revival was going on there. The clergyman told some anecdotes connected with the revival, and recounted some of the reasons why men failed to become Christians. One case he mentioned struck me. He said he had noticed on the outskirts of the congregation, night after night, a man who listened intently, and who gradually moved forward. One night, the clergyman said, he went to him, saying, "My brother, are you not ready to become a Christian?" The man said, no he was not. He said it, not in a defiant tone, but in a sorrowful tone. The clergyman asked him why, whether he did not believe in the truths he had been hearing? Yes, he believed them all. Why, then, wouldn't he

become a Christian? "Well," he said, "I can't join the church without giving up my business; and it is necessary for the support of my wife and children. If I give that up, I don't know how in the world I can get along. I had a hard time before I found my present business, and I cannot afford to give it up. Yet, I can't become a Christian without giving it up." The clergyman asked, "Are you a rum-seller?" No, he was not a rum-seller. Well, the clergyman said, he didn't know what in the world the man could be; it seemed to him that a rum-seller was the only man who does a business that would prevent his becoming a Christian; and he finally said, "What is your business?" The man said, "I sell soap." "Soap!" exclaimed the clergyman, "you sell soap? How in the world does that prevent your becoming a Christian?" "Well," the man said, "It is this way; the soap I sell is one of these patent soaps that are extensively advertised as enabling you to clean clothes very quickly; as containing no deleterious compound whatever. Every cake of the soap that I sell is wrapped in a paper on which is printed a statement that it contains no injurious chemicals, whereas the truth of the matter is that it does, and that though it will take the dirt out of the clothes pretty quickly, it will, in a little while, rot them completely. I have to make my living in this way; and I cannot feel that I can become a Christian if I sell that soap." The minister went on describing how he labored unsuccessfully with that man, and finally wound up by saying, "He stuck to his soap, and lost his soul."

But, if that man lost his soul, was it his fault alone? Whose fault is it that social conditions are such that men have to make that terrible choice between what conscience tells them is right, and the necessity of earning a living? I hold that it is the fault of society; that it is the fault of us all. Pestilence is a curse. The man who

would bring cholera to this country, or the man who, having the power to prevent its coming here, would make no effort to do so, would be guilty of a crime. Poverty is worse than cholera; poverty kills more people than pestilence, even in the best of times. Look at the death statistics of our cities; see where the deaths come quickest; see where it is that little children die like flies—it is in the poorer quarters. And the man who looks with careless eyes upon the ravages of this pestilence, the man who does not set himself to stay and eradicate it, he, I say, is guilty of a crime.

If poverty is appointed by the power which is above us all, then it is no crime; but if poverty is unnecessary, then it is a crime for which society is responsible, and for which society must suffer.

I hold, and I think no one who looks at the facts can fail to see, that poverty is utterly unnecessary. It is not by the decree of the Almighty, but it is because of our own injustice, our own selfishness, our own ignorance, that this scourge, worse than any pestilence, ravages our civilization, bringing want and suffering and degradation, destroying souls as well as bodies. Look over the world, in this hey-day of nineteenth century civilization. In every civilized country under the sun you will find men and women whose condition is worse than that of the savage; men and women and little children with whom the veriest savage could not afford to exchange. Even in this new city of yours, with virgin soil around you, you have had this winter to institute a relief society. Your roads have been filled with tramps, fifteen, I am told, at one time taking shelter in a round-house here. As here, so everywhere, and poverty is deepest where wealth most abounds.

What more unnatural than this? There is nothing in nature like this poverty which today curses us. We see

rapine in nature; we see one species destroying another; but as a general thing animals do not feed on their own kind; and, wherever we see one kind enjoying plenty, all creatures of that kind share it. No man, I think, ever saw a herd of buffalo, of which a few were fat and the great majority lean. No man ever saw a flock of birds, of which two or three were swimming in grease, and the others all skin and bone. Nor in savage life is there anything like the poverty that festers in our civilization.

In a rude state of society there are seasons of want, seasons when people starve; but they are seasons when the earth has refused to yield her increase, when the rain has not fallen from the heavens, or when the land has been swept by some foe——not when there is plenty; and yet the peculiar characteristic of this modern poverty of ours is, that it is deepest where wealth most abounds.

Why, today, while over the civilized world there is so much distress, so much want, what is the cry that goes up? What is the current explanation of the hard times? Over-production! There are so many clothes that men must go ragged; so much coal that in the bitter winters people have to shiver; such over-filled granaries that people actually die by starvation! Want due to over-production! Was a greater absurdity ever uttered? How can there be over-production till all have enough? It is not over-production, it is unjust distribution.

Poverty necessary! Why, think of the enormous powers that are latent in the human brain! Think how invention enables us to do with the power of one man, what not long ago could not be done by the power of a thousand. Think that in England alone, the steam machinery in operation is said to exert a productive force greater than the physical force of the population of the world, were they all adults. And yet we have only begun to invent and discover. We have not yet utilized all that has

already been invented and discovered. And look at the powers of the earth. They have hardly been touched. In every direction as we look, new resources seem to open. Man's ability to produce wealth seems almost infinite—we can set no bounds to it. Look at the power that is flowing by your city in the current of the Mississippi that might be set at work for you. So in every direction energy that we might utilize goes to waste; resources that we might draw upon are untouched. Yet men are delving and straining to satisfy mere animal wants; women are working, working, working their lives away, and too frequently turning in despair from that hard struggle to cast away all that makes the charm of woman.

If the animals can reason, what must they think of us? Look at one of those great ocean steamers ploughing her way across the Atlantic, against wind, against wave, absolutely setting at defiance the utmost power of the elements. If the gulls that hover over her were thinking beings, could they imagine that the animal that could create such a structure as that could actually want for enough to eat? Yet, so it is. How many even of those of us who find life easiest are there who really live a rational life? Think of it, you who believe that there is only one life for man—what a fool at the very best is a man to pass his life in this struggle to merely live? And you who believe, as I believe, that this is not the last of man, that this is a life that opens but another life, think how nine-tenths, aye, I do not know but ninety-nine hundredths of all our vital powers are spent in a mere effort to get a living; or to heap together that which we cannot by any possibility take away. Take the life of the average workingman. Is that the life for which the human brain was intended and the human heart was made? Look at the factories scattered through our country. They are little better than penitentiaries.

I read in the New York papers a while ago that the girls at the Yonkers factories had struck. The papers said that the girls did not seem to know why they had struck, and intimated that it must be just for the fun of striking. Then came out the girls' side of the story, and it appeared that they had struck against the rules in force. They were fined if they spoke to one another, and they were fined still more heavily if they laughed. There was a heavy fine for being a minute late. I visited a lady in Philadelphia who had been a forewoman in various factories, and I asked her, "Is it possible that such rules are enforced?" She said it was so in Philadelphia. There is a fine for speaking to your next neighbor, a fine for laughing; and she told me that the girls in one place where she was employed were fined ten cents a minute for being late, though many of them had to come for miles in winter storms. She told me of one poor girl who really worked hard one week and made $3.50, but the fines against her were $5.25. That seems ridiculous; it is ridiculous, but it is pathetic, and it is shameful.

But take the cases of those even who are comparatively independent and well off. Here is a man working hour after hour, day after day, week after week, in doing one thing over and over again, and for what? Just to live. He is working ten hours a day in order that he may sleep eight, and may have two or three hours for himself when he is tired out and all his faculties are exhausted. That is not a reasonable life; that is not a life for a being possessed of the powers that are in man, and I think every man must have felt it for himself. I know that when I first went to my trade I thought to myself that it was incredible that a man was created to work all day long just to live. I used to read the *Scientific American,* and as invention after invention was heralded in that paper, I

used to think to myself that when I became a man it would not be necessary to work so hard. But, on the contrary, the struggle for existence has become more and more intense. People who want to prove the contrary get up masses of statistics to show that the condition of the working classes is improving. Improvement that you have to take a statistical microscope to discover does not amount to anything. But there is no improvement.

Improvement! Why, according to the last report of the Michigan Bureau of Labor Statistics, as I read yesterday in a Detroit paper, taking all the trades, including some of the very high priced ones, where the wages are from $6 to $7 a day, the average earnings amount to $1.77, and taking out waste time, to $1.40. Now when you consider how a man can live and bring up a family on $1.40 a day, even in Michigan, I do not think you will conclude that the condition of the working classes can have very much improved.

Here is a broad general fact that is asserted by all who have investigated the question, by such men as Hallam, the historian, and Professor Thorold Rogers, who has made a study of the history of prices as they were five centuries ago. When all the productive arts were in the most primitive state, when the most prolific of our modern vegetables had not been introduced, when the breeds of cattle were small and poor, when there were hardly any roads and transportation was exceedingly difficult, when all manufacturing was done by hand—in that rude time the condition of the laborers of England was far better than it is today. In those rude times no man need fear want save when actual famine came, and owing to the difficulties of transportation the plenty of one district could not relieve the scarcity of another. Save in such times no man need fear want. Pauperism, such as exists in modern times, was absolutely unknown. Every one, save the physically

disabled, could make a living, and the poorest lived in rude plenty. But, perhaps, the most astonishing fact brought to light by this investigation is that at that time, under those conditions, in those "dark ages," as we call them, the working day was only eight hours. While, with all our modern inventions and improvements, our working classes have been agitating and struggling in vain to get the working day reduced to eight hours.

Do these facts show improvement? Why, in the rudest state of society, in the most primitive state of the arts, the labor of the natural bread-winner will suffice to provide a living for himself and for those who are dependent upon him. Amid all our inventions there are large bodies of men who cannot do this. What is the most astonishing thing in our civilization? Why, the most astonishing thing to those Sioux chiefs who were recently brought from the Far West and taken through our manufacturing cities in the East, was not the marvelous inventions that enabled machinery to act almost as if it had intellect; it was not the growth of our cities; it was not the speed with which the railway car whirled along; it was not the telegraph or the telephone that most astonished them, but the fact that amid this marvelous development of productive power, they found little children at work. And astonishing that ought to be to us; a most astounding thing!

Talk about improvement in the condition of the working classes, when the facts are that a larger and larger proportion of women and children are forced to toil. Why, I am told that, even here in your own city, there are children of thirteen and fourteen working in factories. In Detroit, according to the report of the Michigan Bureau of Labor Statistics, one-half of the children of school age do not go to school. In New Jersey, the report made to the legislature discloses an amount of misery and

ignorance that is appalling. Children are growing up there, compelled to monotonous toil when they ought to be at play; children who do not know how to play; children who have been so long accustomed to work that they have become used to it; children growing up in such ignorance that they do not know what country New Jersey is in, that they never heard of George Washington, that some of them think Europe is in New York. Such facts are appalling; they mean that the very foundations of the Republic are being sapped. The dangerous man is not the man who tries to excite discontent; the dangerous man is the man who says that all is as it ought to be. Such a state of things cannot continue; such tendencies as we see at work here cannot go on without bringing at last an overwhelming crash.

I say that all this poverty and the ignorance that flows from it is unnecessary; I say that there is no natural reason why we should not all be rich, in the sense, not of having more than each other, but in the sense of all having enough to completely satisfy all physical wants; of all having enough to get such an easy living that we could develop the better part of humanity. There is no reason why wealth should not be so abundant, that no one should think of such a thing as little children at work, or a woman compelled to a toil that nature never intended her to perform; wealth so abundant that there would be no cause for that harassing fear that sometimes paralyzes even those who are not considered "the poor," the fear that every man of us has probably felt, that if sickness should smite him, or if he should be taken away, those whom he loves better than his life would become charges upon charity. "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." I believe that in a really Christian community, in a society that honored not with the lips but with the act, the doctrines of Jesus,

no one would have occasion to worry about physical needs any more than do the lilies of the field. There is enough and to spare. The trouble is that, in this mad struggle, we trample in the mire what has been provided in sufficiency for us all; trample it in the mire while we tear and rend each other.

There is a cause for this poverty, and if you trace it down, you will find its root in a primary injustice. Look over the world today—poverty everywhere. The cause must be a common one. You cannot attribute it to the tariff, or the form of government, or to this thing or to that in which nations differ; because, as deep poverty is common to them all, the cause that produces it must be a common cause. What is that common cause? There is one sufficient cause that is common to all nations; and that is, the appropriation as the property of some, of that natural element on which and from which, all must live.

Take that fact I have spoken of, that appalling fact that, even now, it is harder to live than it was in the ages dark and rude five centuries ago—how do you explain it? There is no difficulty in finding the cause. Whoever reads the history of England, or the history of any other civilized nation (but I speak of the history of England because that is the history with which we are best acquainted) will see the reason. For century after century a Parliament composed of aristocrats and employers passed laws endeavoring to reduce wages, but in vain. Men could not be crowded down to wages that gave a mere living because the bounty of nature was not wholly shut up from them; because some remains of the recognition of the truth that all men have equal rights on the earth still existed; because the land of that country, that which was held in private possession, was only held on a tenure derived from the nation, and for a rent payable back to the nation. The church lands supported

the expenses of public worship, of the maintenance of seminaries, and the care of the poor; the crown lands defrayed the expenses of the civil list; and from a third portion of the lands, those held under military tenures, the army was provided for. There was no national debt in England at that time. They carried on wars for hundreds of years, but at the charge of the landowners. And, more important still, there remained everywhere, and you can see in every old English town their traces to this day, the common lands to which any of the neighborhood was free. It was as those lands were enclosed; it was as the commons were gradually monopolized, as the church lands were made the prey of greedy courtiers, as the crown lands were given away as absolute property to the favorites of the king, as the military tenants shirked their rents, and laid the expenses they had agreed to defray upon the nation in taxation, that bore upon industry and upon thrift—it was then that poverty began to deepen, and the tramp appeared in England, just as today he is appearing in our new States.

Now, think of it—is not land monopolization a sufficient reason for poverty? What is man? In the first place, he is an animal, a land animal, who cannot live without land. All that man produces comes from land, all productive labor in the final analysis consists in working up land; or materials drawn from land into such forms as fit them for the satisfaction of human wants and desires. Why, man's very body is drawn from the land. Children of the soil, we come from the land, and to the land we must return. Take away from man all that belongs to the land, and what have you but a disembodied spirit? Therefore, he who holds the land on which and from which another man must live, is that man's master; and the man is his slave. The man who holds the land on which I must live can command me to

life or to death just as absolutely as though I were his chattel. Talk about abolishing slavery—we have not abolished slavery—we have only abolished one rude form of it, chattel slavery. There is a deeper and more insidious form, a more cursed form yet before us to abolish, in this industrial slavery that makes a man a virtual slave, while taunting him and mocking him with the name of freedom. Poverty! want! they will sting as much as the lash. Slavery! God knows there are horrors enough in slavery; but there are deeper horrors in our civilized society today. Bad as chattel slavery was, it did not drive slave mothers to kill their children, yet you may read in official reports that the system of child insurance, which has taken root so strongly in England, and which is now spreading over our Eastern States, has perceptibly and largely increased the rate of child mortality!—What does that mean?

Robinson Crusoe, as you know, when he rescued Friday from the cannibals, made him his slave. Friday had to serve Crusoe. But, supposing Crusoe had said, "Oh, man and brother, I am very glad to see you, and I welcome you to this island, and you shall be a free and independent citizen, with just as much to say as I have—except that this island is mine—and, of course, as I can do as I please with my own property, you must not use it save upon my terms," Friday would have been just as much Crusoe's slave as though he had called him one. Friday was not a fish, he could not swim off through the sea; he was not a bird, and could not fly off through the air; if he lived at all, he had to live on that island. And if that island was Crusoe's, Crusoe was his master through life to death.

A friend of mine, who believes as I do upon this question, was talking a while ago with another friend of mine who is a greenbacker, but who had not paid much

attention to the land question. Our greenback friend said, "Yes, yes, the land question is an important question; oh, I admit the land question is a very important question; but then there are other important questions. There is this question, and that question, and the other question; and there is the money question. The money question is a very important question; it is a more important question than the land question. You give me all the money, and you can take all the land." My friend said, "Well, suppose you had all the money in the world and I had all the land in the world. What would you do if I were to give you notice to quit?"

Do you know that I do not think the average man realizes what land is? I know a little girl who has been going to school for some time, studying geography, and all that sort of thing; and one day she said to me: "Here is something about the surface of the earth. I wonder what the surface of the earth looks like?" "Well," I said, "look out into the yard there. That is the surface of the earth." She said, "That the surface of the earth? Our yard the surface of the earth? Why, I never thought of it!" That is very much the case not only with grown men, but with such wise beings as newspaper editors. They seem to think, when you talk of land, that you always refer to farms; to think that the land question is a question that relates entirely to farmers, as though land had no other use than growing crops. Now, I should like to know how a man could even edit a newspaper without having the use of some land. He might swing himself by straps and go up in a balloon, but he could not even then get along without land. What supports the balloon in the air? Land; the surface of the earth. Let the earth drop, and what would become of the balloon? The air that supports the balloon is supported in turn

by land. So it is with everything else men can do. Whether a man is working away three thousand feet under the surface of the earth, or whether he is working up in the top of one of those immense buildings they have in New York, whether he is ploughing the soil or sailing across the ocean, he is still using land.

Land! Why, in owning a piece of ground, what do you own? The lawyers will tell you that you own from the center of the earth right up to heaven; and, so far as all human purposes go, you do. In New York they are building houses thirteen and fourteen stories high. What are men, living in those upper stories, paying for? There is a friend of mine who has an office in one of them, and he estimates that he pays by the cubic foot for air. Well, the man who owns the surface of the land has the renting of the air up there, and would have if the buildings were carried up for miles.

This land question is the bottom question. Man is a land animal. Suppose you want to build a house; can you build it without a place to put it? What is it built of? Stone, or mortar, or wood, or iron—they all come from the earth. Think of any article of wealth you choose, any of those things which men struggle for, where do they come from? From the land. It is the bottom question.

The land question is simply the labor question; and when some men own that element from which all wealth must be drawn, and upon which all must live, then they have the power of living without work, and therefore, those who do work get less of the products of work.

Did you ever think of the utter absurdity and strangeness of the fact that, all over the civilized world, the working classes are the poor classes? Go into any city in the world, and get into a cab, and ask the man to drive you where the working people live; he won't

take you to where the fine houses are; he will take you, on the contrary, into the squalid quarters, the poorer quarters. Did you ever think how curious that is? Think for a moment how it would strike a rational being who had never been on the earth before, if such an intelligence could come down, and you were to explain to him how we live on earth, how houses, and food and clothing, and all the many things we need were all produced by work, would he not think that the working people would be the people who lived in the finest houses and had most of everything that work produces? Yet, whether you took him to London or Paris, or New York, or even to Burlington, he would find that those called working people were the people who lived in the poorest houses.

All this is strange—just think of it. We naturally despise poverty; and it is reasonable that we should. I do not say—I distinctly repudiate it—that the people who are poor are poor always from their own fault, or even in most cases; but it ought to be so. If any good man or woman had the power to create a world, it would be a sort of a world in which no one would be poor unless he was lazy or vicious. But that is just precisely the kind of a world that this is; that is just precisely the kind of a world that the Creator has made. Nature gives to labor, and to labor alone; there must be human work before any article of wealth can be produced; and, in the natural state of things the man who toiled honestly and well would be the rich man, and he who did not work would be poor. We have so reversed the order of nature, that we are accustomed to think of the working-man as a poor man.

And if you trace it out I believe you will see that the primary cause of this is that we compel those who work to pay others for permission to do so. You may buy a coat,

a horse, a house; there you are paying the seller for labor exerted, for something that he has produced, or that he has got from the man who did produce it; but when you pay a man for land, what are you paying him for? You are paying for something that no man has produced; you pay him for something that was here before man was, or for a value that was created not by him individually, but by the community of which you are a part. What is the reason that the land here, where we stand tonight, is worth more than it was twenty-five years ago? What is the reason that land in the center of New York, that once could be bought by the mile for a jug of whisky, is now worth so much that, though you were to cover it with gold, you would not have its value? Is it not because of the increase of population? Take away that population, and where would the value of the land be? Look at it in any way you please.

We talk about over-production. How can there be such a thing as over-production while people want? All these things that are said to be over-produced are desired by many people. Why do they not get them? They do not get them because they have not the means to buy them; not that they do not want them. Why have not they the means to buy them? They earn too little. When great masses of men have to work for an average of $1.40 a day, it is no wonder that great quantities of goods cannot be sold.

Now, why is it that men have to work for such low wages? Because, if they were to demand higher wages, there are plenty of unemployed men ready to step into their places. It is this mass of unemployed men who compel that fierce competition that drives wages down to the point of bare subsistence. Why is it that there are men who cannot get employment? Did you ever think what a strange thing it is that men cannot find employ-

ment? Adam had no difficulty in finding employment; neither had Robinson Crusoe; the finding of employment was the last thing that troubled them.

If men cannot find an employer, why can not they employ themselves? Simply because they are shut out from the element on which human labor can alone be exerted. Men are compelled to compete with each other for the wages of an employer, because they have been robbed of the natural opportunities of employing themselves; because they cannot find a piece of God's world on which to work without paying some other human creature for the privilege.

I do not mean to say that, even after you had set right this fundamental injustice, there would not be many things to do; but this I do mean to say, that our treatment of land lies at the bottom of all social questions. This I do mean to say, that, do what you please, reform as you may, you never can get rid of widespread poverty so long as the element on which, and from which, all men must live is made the private property of some men. It is utterly impossible. Reform government—get taxes down to the minimum—build railroads; institute co-operative stores; divide profits, if you choose, between employers and employed—and what will be the result? The result will be that the land will increase in value—that will be the result—that and nothing else. Experience shows this. Do not all improvements simply increase the value of land—the price that some must pay others for the privilege of living?

Consider the matter. I say it with all reverence, and I merely say it because I wish to impress a truth upon your minds—it is utterly impossible, so long as His laws are what they are, that God Himself could relieve poverty—utterly impossible. Think of it, and you will see. Men pray to the Almighty to relieve poverty. But poverty

comes not from God's laws—it is blasphemy of the worst kind to say that; it comes from man's injustice to his fellows. Supposing the Almighty were to hear the prayer, how could He carry out the request, so long as His laws are what they are? Consider—the Almighty gives us nothing of the things that constitute wealth; He merely gives us the raw material, which must be utilized by man to produce wealth. Does He not give us enough of that now? How could He relieve poverty even if He were to give us more? Supposing, in answer to these prayers, He were to increase the power of the sun, or the virtues of the soil? Supposing He were to make plants more prolific, or animals to produce after their kind more abundantly? Who would get the benefit of it? Take a country where land is completely monopolized, as it is in most of the civilized countries—who would get the benefit of it? Simply the landowners. And even if God, in answer to prayer, were to send down out of the heavens those things that men require, who would get the benefit?

In the Old Testament we are told that, when the Israelites journeyed through the desert, they were hungered, and that God sent down out of the heavens—manna. There was enough for all of them, and they all took it and were relieved. But, supposing that desert had been held as private property, as the soil of Great Britain is held; as the soil even of our new States is being held. Suppose that one of the Israelites had a square mile, and another one had twenty square miles, and another one had a hundred square miles, and the great majority of the Israelites did not have enough to set the soles of their feet upon, which they could call their own—what would become of the manna? What good would it have done to the majority? Not a whit. Though God had sent down manna enough for all, that manna would have

been the property of the landholders; they would have employed some of the others, perhaps, to gather it up in heaps for them, and would have sold it to their hungry brethren. Consider it: this purchase and sale of manna might have gone on until the majority of the Israelites had given all they had, even to the clothes off their backs. What then? Well, then they would not have had anything left with which to buy manna, and the consequences would have been that while they went hungry the manna would have lain in great heaps, and the landowners would have been complaining about the over-production of manna. There would have been a great harvest of manna and hungry people, just precisely the phenomenon that we see today.

I cannot go over all the points I would like to try; but I wish to call your attention to the utter absurdity of private property in land! Why, consider it—the idea of a man selling the earth—the earth, our common mother. A man selling that which no man produced A man passing title from one generation to another. Why, it is the most absurd thing in the world. Did you ever think of it? What right has a dead man to land? For whom was this earth created? It was created for the living, certainly not for the dead. Well, now, we treat it as though it was created for the dead. Where do our land titles come from? They come from men who, for the most part, are passed and gone. Here, in this new country, you get a little nearer the original source; but go to the Eastern States, and go back over the Atlantic. There you may clearly see the power that comes from landownership.

As I say, the man that owns the land is the master of those who must live on it. Here is a modern instance: you who are familiar with the history of the Scottish Church know that in the forties there was a disruption in

the church. You who have read Hugh Miller's work on *The Cruise of the Betsey* know something about it; how a great body, led by Dr. Chalmers, came out from the Established Church and said they would set up a Free Church. In the Established Church were a great many of the landowners. Some of them, like the Duke of Buccleugh, owning miles and miles of land on which no common Scotsman had a right to put his foot save by the Duke of Buccleugh's permission. These landowners refused not only to allow these Free Churchmen to have ground upon which to erect a church, but they would not let them stand on their land and worship God. You who have read *The Cruise of the Betsey* know that it is the story of a clergyman who was obliged to make his home in a boat on the wild sea, because he was not allowed to have land enough to live on. In many places the people had to take the Sacrament with the tide coming to their knees—many a man lost his life worshipping on the roads, in the rain and snow. They were not permitted to go on Mr. Landlord's land and worship God, and had to take to the roads. The Duke of Buccleugh stood out for seven years, compelling people to worship in the roads, until finally relenting a little, he allowed them to worship God in a gravel pit; whereupon they passed a resolution of thanks to His Grace.

But that is not what I wanted to tell you. The thing that struck me was this significant fact: as soon as the disruption occurred the Free Church, composed of a great many able men, at once sent a delegation to the landlords to ask permission for Scotsmen to worship God in Scotland and in their own way. This delegation set out for London—they had to go to London, England, to get permission for Scotsmen to worship God in Scotland and in their own native home!

But that is not the most absurd thing. In one place,

where they were refused land upon which to stand and worship God, the late landowner had died and his estate was in the hands of the trustees, and the answer of the trustees was that, so far as they were concerned, they would exceedingly like to allow them to have a place to put up a church to worship, but they could not conscientiously do it, because they knew that such a course would be very displeasing to the late Mr. Monaltie! Now, this dead man had gone to heaven, let us hope; at any rate he had gone away from this world, but, lest it might displease him, men yet living could not worship God. Is it possible for absurdity to go any further?

You may say that those Scotch people are very absurd people, but they are not a whit more so than we are: I read only a little while ago of some Long Island fishermen who had been paying as rent for the privilege of fishing there, a certain part of the catch. They paid it because they believed that James II., a dead man centuries ago, a man who never put his foot in America, a king who was kicked off the English throne, had said they had to pay it, and they got up a committee, went to the county town and searched the records. They could not find anything in the records to show that James II. had ever ordered that they should give any of their fish to anybody, and so they refused to pay any longer. But if they had found that James II. had really said they should, they would have gone on paying. Can anything be more absurd?

There is a square in New York—Stuyvesant Square—that is locked up at six o'clock every evening, even on the long summer evenings. Why is it locked up? Why are the children not allowed to play there? Why because old Mr. Stuyvesant, dead and gone I don't know how many years ago, so willed it. Now, can anything be more absurd?*

* After a popular agitation, the park authorities since decided to leave the gates open later than six o'clock.

Yet, that is not any more absurd than our land titles. From whom do they come? Dead man after dead man. Suppose you get on the cars here going to Council Bluffs or Chicago. You find a passenger with his baggage strewn over the seats. You say, "Will you give me a seat, if you please, sir?" He replies, "No; I bought this seat." "Bought this seat? From whom did you buy it?" "I bought it from the man who got out at the last station." That is the way we manage this earth of ours.

Is it not a self-evident truth, as Thomas Jefferson said, that "the land belongs in usufruct to the living," and that they who have died have left it, and have no power to say how it shall be disposed of? Title to land! Where can a man get any title which makes the earth his property?

There is a sacred right to property—sacred because ordained by the laws of nature, that is to say, by the law of God, and necessary to social order and civilization. That is the right of property in things produced by labor; it rests on the right of a man to himself. That which a man produces, that is his against all the world, to give or to keep, to lend, to sell or to bequeath; but how can he get such a right to land when it was here before he came? Individual claims to land rest only on appropriation. I read in a recent number of the *Nineteenth Century,* possibly some of you may have read it, an article by an ex-Prime Minister of Australia, in which there was a little story that attracted my attention. It was of a man named Galahard, who, in the early days, got up to the top of a high hill in one of the finest parts of Western Australia. He got up there, looked all around, and made this proclamation: "All the land that is in sight from the top of this hill I claim for myself: and all the land that is out of sight I claim for my son John."

That story is of universal application. Land titles everywhere come from just such appropriation. Now, under certain circumstances, appropriation can give a right. You invite a company of gentlemen to dinner, and you say to them, "Be seated, gentlemen," and I get into this chair. Well, that seat, for the time being, is mine by the right of appropriation. It would be very ungentlemanly, it would be very wrong, for any one of the other guests to come up and say, "Get out of that chair, I want to sit there!" But that right of possession, which is good so far as the chair is concerned for the time, does not give me a right to appropriate all there is on the table before me. Grant that a man has a right to appropriate such natural elements as he can use, has he any right to appropriate more than he can use? Has a guest, in such a case as I have supposed, a right to appropriate more than he needs, and make other people stand up? That is what is done.

Why, look all over this country—look at this town or any other town. If men only took what they wanted to use we should all have enough; but they take what they do not want to use at all. Here are a lot of Englishmen coming over here and getting titles to our land in vast tracts; what do they want with our land? They do not want it at all; it is not the land they want; they have no use for American land. What they want is the income that they know they can in a little while get from it. Where does that income come from? It comes from labor, from the labor of American citizens. What we are selling to these people is our children, not land.

Poverty? Can there be any doubt of its cause? Go into the old countries—go into western Ireland, into the Highlands of Scotland; these are purely primitive communities. There you will find people as poor as poor can be—living year after year on oatmeal or on potatoes, and

often going hungry. I could tell you many a pathetic story. Speaking to a Scottish physician who was telling me how this diet was inducing among these people a disease similar to that which from the same cause is ravaging Italy (the Pellagra), I said to him: "There is plenty of fish; why don't they catch fish? There is plenty of game. I know the laws are against it, but cannot they take it on the sly?" "That," he said, "never enters their heads. Why, if a man was even suspected of having a taste for trout or grouse he would have to leave at once." There is no difficulty in discovering what makes those people poor. They have no right to anything that nature gives them. All they can make above a living they must pay to the landlord. They not only have to pay for the land that they use, but they have to pay for the seaweed that comes ashore and for the turf they dig from the bogs. They dare not improve, for any improvements they make are made an excuse for putting up the rent. These people who work hard, live in hovels, and the landlords, who do not work at all—oh! they live in luxury in London or Paris. If they have hunting boxes there, why, they are magnificent castles as compared with the hovels in which the men live who do the work. Is there any question as to the cause of the poverty there?

Now, go into the cities, and what do you see? Why, you see even a lower depth of poverty; aye, if I would point out the worst of the evils of land monopoly I would not take you to Connemara; I would not take you to Skye or Kintyre—I would take you to Dublin, or Glasgow or London. There is something worse than physical deprivation, something worse than starvation; and that is the degradation of the mind, the death of the soul. That is what you will find in those cities.

Now, what is the cause of that? Why, it is plainly to be seen; the people driven off the land in the country are driven into the slums of the cities. For every man that is driven off the land, the demand for the produce of the workmen of the cities is lessened; and the man himself, with his wife and children, is forced among those workmen to compete upon any terms for a bare living and force wages down. Get work he must or starve—get work he must, or do that which those people, so long as they maintain their manly feelings, dread more than death, go to the almshouse. That is the reason, here as in Great Britain, that the cities are overcrowded. Open the land that is locked up, that is held by dogs-in-the-manger, who will not use it themselves and will not allow anybody else to use it, and you would see no more of tramps and hear no more of over-production.

The utter absurdity of this thing of private property in land! I defy anyone to show me any good from it, look where you please. Go out in the new lands, where my attention was first called to it, or go to the heart of the capital of the world—London. Everywhere, when your eyes are once opened, you will see its inequality and you will see its absurdity. You do not have to go farther than Burlington. You have here a most beautiful site for a city, but the city itself, as compared with what it might be, is a miserable, straggling town. A gentleman showed me today a big hole alongside one of your streets. The place has been filled up all around it, and this hole is left. It is neither pretty nor useful. Why does that hole stay there? Well, it stays there because somebody claims it as his private property. There is a man, this gentleman told me, who wished to grade another lot, and wanted somewhere to put the dirt he took off it, and he offered to buy this hole so that he might fill it up. Now, it would have been a good thing for

Burlington to have it filled up, a good thing for you all—your town would look better, and you yourself would be in no danger of tumbling into it some dark night. Why, my friend pointed out to me another similar hole in which water had collected and told me that two children had been drowned there. And he likewise told me that a drunken man some years ago had fallen into such a hole, and had brought a suit against the city which cost you taxpayers some $11,000. Clearly it is to the interest of you all to have that particular hole I am talking of filled up. The man who wanted to fill it up offered the hole-owner $300. But the hole-owner refused the offer, and declared that he would hold out until he could get $1,000; and, in the meanwhile, that unsightly and dangerous hole must remain. This is but an illustration of private property in land.

You may see the same thing all over this country. See how injuriously in the agricultural districts this thing of private property in land affects the roads and the distances between the people. A man does not take what land he wants, what he can use; but he takes all he can get, and the consequence is that his next neighbor has to go further along, people are separated from each other further than they ought to be, to the increased difficulty of production, to the loss of neighborhood and companionship. They have more roads to maintain than they can decently maintain; they must do more work to get the same result, and life is in every way harder and drearier.

When you come to the cities, it is just the other way. In the country the people are too much scattered; in the great cities they are too crowded. Go to a city like New York, and there they are jammed together like sardines in a box, living family upon family, one above the other. It is an utterly unnatural and unwholesome life. How can you have anything like a home in a tene-

ment room or two or three rooms? How can children be brought up healthily with no place to play? Two or three weeks ago I read of a New York judge who fined two little boys five dollars for playing hop-scotch on the street—where else could they play? Private property in land had robbed them of all place to play. Even a temperance man, who had investigated the subject, said that in his opinion the gin palaces of London were a positive good in this, that they enabled the people whose abodes were dark and squalid rooms to see a little brightness, and thus prevent them from going wholly mad.

What is the reason for this overcrowding of cities? There is no natural reason. Take New York, one-half its area is not built upon. Why, then, must people crowd together as they do there? Simply because of private ownership of land. There is plenty of room to build houses, and plenty of people who want to build houses, but before anybody can build a house a blackmail price must be paid to some dog-in-the-manger. It costs, in many cases, more to get vacant ground upon which to build a house than it does to build the house. And then what happens to the man who pays this blackmail and builds a house? Down comes the tax-gatherer and fines him for building the house.

It is so all over the United States—the men who improve, the men who turn the prairie into farms, and the desert into gardens, the men who beautify your cities, are taxed and fined for having done these things. Now, nothing is clearer than that the people of New York want more houses; and I think that even here in Burlington you could get along with more houses. Why, then, should you fine a man who builds one? Look all over this country—the bulk of the taxation rests upon the improver; the man who puts up a building or establishes a factory, or cultivates a farm, he is taxed for it;

and not merely taxed for it, but I think, in nine cases out of ten, the land which he uses, the bare land, is taxed more than the adjoining lot, or the adjoining 160 acres that some speculator is holding as a mere dog-in-the-manger, not using it himself, and not allowing anybody else to use it.

I am talking too long; but let me, in a few words, point out the way of getting rid of land monopoly, securing the right of all to the elements which are necessary for life. We could not divide the land. In a rude state of society, as among the ancient Hebrews, giving each family its lot, and making it inalienable, we might secure something like equality. But in a complex civilization that will not suffice. It is not, however, necessary to divide up the land. All that is necessary is to divide up the income that comes from the land. In that way we can secure absolute equality; nor could the adoption of this principle involve any rude shock or violent change. It can be brought about gradually and easily by abolishing taxes that now rest upon capital, labor, and improvements, and raising all our public revenues by the taxation of land values; and the longer you think of it the clearer you will see that in every possible way will it be a benefit.

Now, supposing we should abolish all other taxes direct and indirect, substituting for them a tax upon land values, what would be the effect? In the first place it would be to kill speculative values. It would be to remove from the newer parts of the country the bulk of the taxation, and put it on the richer parts. It would be to exempt the pioneer from taxation, and make the larger cities pay more of it. It would be to relieve energy and enterprise, capital and labor, from all those burdens that now bear upon them. What a start that would give to production! In the second place, we could, from the

value of land, not merely pay all the present expenses of the government, but we could do infinitely more. In the city of San Francisco, James Lick left a few blocks of ground to be used for public purposes there, and the rent amounts to so much, that out of it will be built the largest telescope in the world, large public baths, and other public buildings, and various costly works. If, instead of these few blocks, the whole value of the land upon which the city is built had accrued to San Francisco, what could she not do?

So in this little town, where land values are very low as compared with such cities as Chicago and San Francisco, you could do many things for mutual benefit and public improvement did you appropriate to public purposes the land values that now go to individuals. You could have a great free library; you could have an art gallery; you could get yourselves a public park, a magnificent public park, too. You have here one of the finest natural sites for a beautiful town that I know of, and I have traveled much. You might make on this site a city that it would be a pleasure to live in. You will not, as you go now—oh! no! Why, the very fact that you have a magnificent view here will cause somebody to hold on all the more tightly to the land that commands this view, and charge higher prices for it. The State of New York wants to buy a strip of land so as to enable the people to see Niagara, but what a price she must pay for it. Look at all the great cities; in Philadelphia, for instance, in order to build their great city hall they had to block up the only two wide streets they had in the city. Everywhere you go you may see how private property in land prevents public as well as private improvement.

But I have no time to enter further into details. I can only ask you to think upon this thing, and the more you will see its desirability. As an English friend of

mine puts it, "No taxes and a pension for everybody;" and why should it not be? To take land values for public purposes is not really to impose a tax, but to take for public purposes a value created by the community. And out of the fund which would thus accrue from the common property, we might, without degradation to anybody, provide enough to actually secure from want all who were deprived of their natural protectors, or met with accident; or any man who should grow so old that he could not work. All prating that is heard from some quarters about its hurting the common people to give them what they do not work for is humbug. The truth is, that anything that injures self-respect, degrades, does harm; but if you give it as a right, as something to which every citizen is entitled to, it does not degrade. Charity schools do degrade children that are sent to them, but public schools do not.

But all such benefits as these, while great, would be incidental. The great thing would be that the reform I propose would tend to open opportunities to labor and enable men to provide employment for themselves. That is the great advantage. We should gain the enormous productive power that is going to waste all over the country, the power of idle hands that would gladly be at work. And that removed, then you would see wages begin to mount. It is not that everyone would turn farmer, or everyone build himself a house if he had an opportunity for doing so, but so many could, and would, as to relieve the pressure on the labor market and provide employment for all others. And as wages mounted to the higher levels then you would see the productive power increased. The country where wages are high is the country of greatest productive power. Where wages are highest there will invention be most active; there will labor be most intelligent; there will be the greatest yield for the expenditure of exertion. The more you think of it the more clearly

you will see that what I say is true. I cannot hope to convince you in talking for an hour or two, but I shall be content if I shall put you upon inquiry. Think for yourselves; ask yourselves whether this widespread fact of poverty is not a crime, and a crime for which everyone of us, man and woman, who does not do what he or she can do to call attention to it and to do away with it, is responsible.

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